

## CHAPTER 1

# THE ROLE OF THE TANK AND MECHANIZED INFANTRY BATTALION TASK FORCE

*The role of the tank and mechanized infantry battalion task force is to fight and win engagements on any part of the battlefield. The task force combines the efforts of its company teams, combat support, and combat service support elements to execute tactical missions as part of a brigade or division operation. Mechanized infantry and armor battalions are an essential part of the Army's principal formation for conducting sustained combined arms and close combat land operations. America's tank and mechanized infantry battalions serve as a deterrent to armed conflict and are capable of deploying worldwide and conducting full-spectrum operations.*

## Section I. BATTALION AND TASK FORCE MISSION ESSENTIAL TASKS

This manual addresses the tactical employment and operation of the battalion task force (TF), but battalion commanders must read and understand FM 3-90.3, FM 3-0, and FM 3-90. FM 3-0 establishes the Army's keystone doctrine for full-spectrum operations with warfighting as the Army's primary focus. Although built upon global strategic responsiveness for prompt, sustained Army force operations on land, FM 3-0 provides overarching doctrinal direction for the conduct of full-spectrum operations detailed in this and other Army manuals. FM 3-90 introduces the basic concepts and control measures associated with the art of tactics, but it cannot be read in isolation. FM 3-90 must be used with FM 3-0, the concepts in FM 3-07, and the "plan, prepare, execute, and assess" cycle as it relates to the military decision-making process (MDMP) that is described in FM 101-5. Together, these publications provide the essential framework for understanding this manual.

### 1-1. BATTALION TASK FORCE MISSION ESSENTIAL TASK DEVELOPMENT

Tank and mechanized infantry task forces develop their mission essential tasks list (METL) based on their war plans and external directives as described in FM 7-0. Mission essential tasks are the operational expression of the tank and mechanized infantry task forces' core competencies. They describe what well-trained, superbly-led, and well-equipped soldiers do to support the Army's mission essential tasks of shaping the security environment, responding promptly to crisis, dominating land operations, and providing support to civil authorities (as described in FM 3-0).

a. **Shape the Security Environment.** National security and national military strategies establish an imperative for engagement. The US will remain politically and militarily engaged in the world and will maintain military superiority over potential adversaries. Forward basing, forward presence, and force projection enhance the ability of army forces to engage other nations--their people, governments, and militaries. Tank and mechanized infantry task forces provide an overwhelming presence to potential adversaries and allow these units to conduct full spectrum operations regardless of the

conditions. Due to their structure, and their ability to tailor a mounted force to the operational requirements, they are uniquely suited to counter forces hostile to the US and its allies. Battalion TFs undertake peacetime military engagement (PME) missions to reassure foreign governments, build trust and confidence, promote regional stability, reduce potential conflicts and threats, and deter aggression and coercion.

b. **Respond Promptly to Crisis.** The Army's capability to rapidly project its forces to any environment provides military leaders the ability to increase force presence, to increase the magnitude of the enemy's dilemma, and to act decisively within the time specified by the joint force commander (JFC). Battalion TFs train to rapidly deploy personnel and equipment utilizing rail, sealift, and airlift from home stations to a theater of operations or rapidly deploy personnel by airlift and draw equipment from prepositioned stocks enabling them to quickly maneuver throughout the depth of the area of operations (AO).

c. **Dominate Land Operations.** The threat or use of Army tank and mechanized forces to close with and destroy enemy forces through maneuver and precision direct and indirect fires is the ultimate means of imposing our will on the enemy and achieving a decisive outcome. These units provide the commander with the ability to seize enemy territory, destroy the enemy's armed forces, and eliminate his means of civil population control. Tank and mechanized infantry task forces conduct sustained and large-scale actions in full-spectrum operations throughout the depth of the AO. Sustained land operations provide for long-term establishment of conditions required by the nation in support of our national objectives. Faced with an enemy with the ability to conduct sustained resistance, the unit continuously creates conditions throughout the AO that lead to the enemy's ultimate defeat. Combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) by attached and supporting organizations make sustained land operations by the battalion TF possible.

## 1-2. OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Tank and mechanized infantry task forces conduct operations in an operational environment consisting of six dimensions. Each affects how the unit combines, sequences, and conducts military operations. Commanders tailor forces, employ diverse capabilities, and support different missions to succeed in this environment.

a. **Threat Dimension.** Multiple threats to US national interests exist. Some threats are direct, such as a cross border attack; others are indirect, such as coercion. Some regional powers aspire to dominate their neighbors and have the required conventional force capabilities. Such situations may threaten US vital interests, US allies, or regional stability. Transnational groups conduct a range of activities that threaten US interests and citizens at home and abroad. Extremism, ethnic disputes, religious rivalries, and human disasters contribute to destabilizing governments and regions through extensive refugee migrations. Collectively, these transnational threats may adversely affect US interests and may result in military involvement (as further described in FM 3-0).

(1) In the foreseeable future, most nations will modernize and maintain a military capability for countering regional threats or seeking opportunities to further their national goals. Military change incorporates advances in information technology, ballistic and missile capabilities, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and genetic engineering. Potential threats vary from heavy conventional units to adaptive, asymmetric forces

structured for local and regional use. Adversaries will seek and obtain technologies that challenge US strengths in information technology, navigation, night-vision systems, and precision targeting and strike capabilities. The proliferation of WMD and long-range delivery systems will enable adversaries to threaten US forces at greater ranges with increased lethality and precision.

(2) Adversaries will develop their warfighting doctrine based on perceived US strengths and vulnerabilities. They will try to prevent projection of US forces and control the nature and tempo of US actions through asymmetric operations and adaptive forces. They will attempt to counter US air operations and neutralize US technological advantages such as precision strike capabilities. Adversaries will use conventional and unconventional means to destroy our national will and our capability to wage war.

(3) Adversaries will also seek to shape the conditions to their advantage by changing the nature of the conflict or employing capabilities that they believe will be difficult for US forces to counter. They will use complex terrain, urban environments, and force dispersal-survival methods to offset US advantages.

(4) Our adversaries will continue to seek every opportunity (both foreign and domestic) to gain an advantage over US and multinational forces. When countered, they will adapt to the changing conditions and pursue all available options to avoid destruction or defeat. This environment and wide array of threats presents significant challenges. To counter such threats, tank and mechanized infantry task forces will be called upon to defeat a technologically sophisticated and lethal adversary while simultaneously protecting noncombatants and the infrastructure on which they depend.

b. **Political dimension.** Successful military operations require commanders to have a clear sense of objectives. They must understand how the use of military force fits into the national security strategy and the desired military conditions required to meet policy objectives. Each political decision during the conduct of operations has strategic, operational, and tactical implications. Likewise, each strategic, operational, and tactical action directly or indirectly impacts the political dimension.

c. **Unified Action Dimension.** The US national military strategy calls for Army forces to act as part of a fully interoperable and integrated joint force. Combat commanders synchronize air, land, sea, space, and special operations forces to accomplish their mission. Tank and mechanized infantry task forces can expect to operate in a unified command structure both in a major theater of war (MTW) and more commonly in small-scale contingencies (SSC). The tank and mechanized infantry task force may work with multinational and interagency partners to accomplish the full spectrum of missions. Tank and mechanized infantry task forces committed to SSCs can expect to protect American lives and interests, support political initiatives, facilitate diplomacy, promote fundamental ideals, and disrupt illegal activities. Close coordination is the foundation of successful unified action.

d. **Land Combat Operations Dimension.** Land combat continues to be the salient feature of combat and is the primary function of the battalion task force. Land combat usually involves destroying or defeating enemy forces or taking land objectives that reduce the enemy's willingness to fight. Four characteristics distinguish land combat: scope, duration, terrain, and permanence.

(1) **Scope.** Land combat involves direct and indirect combat with an enemy throughout the depth of an operational area. Forces conduct simultaneous and sequential

operations in contiguous and noncontiguous AOs. Commanders maneuver forces to seize and retain key and decisive terrain. They use the elements of combat power to defeat or destroy enemy forces.

(2) **Duration.** Land combat is repetitive and continuous. It involves rendering an enemy incapable or unwilling to conduct further action. It may require destroying him.

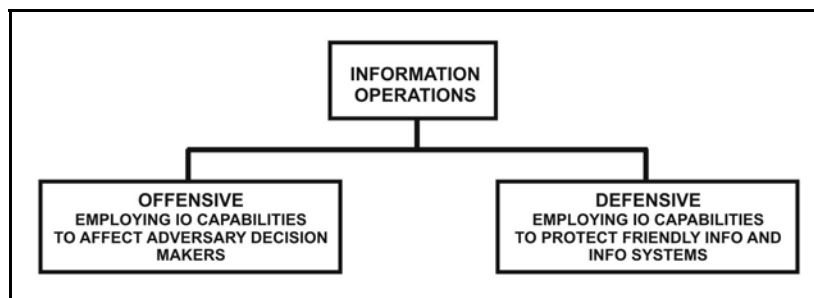
(3) **Terrain.** Land combat takes place amid a variety of natural and manmade features. The complexity of the ground environment contrasts significantly with the relative transparency of air, sea, and space. Plans for land combat must account for the visibility and clutter provided by the terrain and the effects of weather and climate.

(4) **Permanence.** Land combat frequently requires seizing or securing terrain. With control of terrain comes control of populations and productive capacity. Thus, land combat makes permanent the temporary effects of other operations.

e. **Information Dimension.** Decisive operations historically have been enabled by information superiority. Information superiority provides commanders with accurate, timely information that enables them to make superior decisions and act faster than their adversaries. Information superiority, derived from intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); information management (IM); psychological operations (PSYOP); and information operations (IOs), provides a common framework for how to plan, task, and control assets; how and where to report information; and how to use information. The information environment also includes information derived from nongovernmental individuals and organizations, such as the media, that produce and disseminate information that affects public opinion that can alter the conduct and perceived legitimacy of military operations.

(1) IOs are the actions taken to enable, enhance, and protect the friendly force's ability to collect, process, and act on information to achieve an advantage over enemy forces. A successful IO program will effect our adversaries' decision-making processes, information, and information systems while defending our friendly decision-making processes, information, and information systems.

(2) Units conduct IOs across the full range of military operations from operations in garrison, through deployment to combat operations, and continuing through redeployment upon mission completion. Information operations include both offensive information operations and defensive information operations (Figure 1-1). IOs provide commanders with essential tools for protecting their organizations and systems. The overall force objectives are linked with higher headquarters objectives. IO objectives support these overall objectives and may be designated as high as the National Command Authority (NCA) and supported by several echelons of command. Available resources define what the forces can accomplish. The TF may have PSYOP personnel supporting it in order to assist the commander. The target audience may include enemy forces, the local population, and or displaced personnel moving through, or residing in, the area. PSYOP messages oriented to the local situation can be developed and produced using previously approved themes and objectives.



**Figure 1-1. Information operations.**

f. **Technological Dimension.** Technology enhances leader, unit, and soldier performance and impacts how Army forces plan, prepare, and execute full-spectrum operations in peace, conflict, and war. Technology has significantly increased our ability to conduct ISR operations, and it greatly enhances the ability to conduct battle command through modern telecommunications and microprocessing. Munitions are increasingly lethal and target acquisition systems are more precise. The proliferation of advanced technology systems requires the commander to integrate the capabilities of highly modernized organizations and less-modernized and multinational units. Additionally, commanders must also realize that they do not have a monopoly on advanced technology. Even adversaries lacking any research and development program can purchase sophisticated systems in the global marketplace and gain selected parity or superiority to US systems.

### 1-3. FULL-SPECTRUM OPERATIONS

Tank and mechanized infantry task forces are trained and equipped to conduct full-spectrum operations. Tank and mechanized infantry task force commanders may combine different types of operations simultaneously and sequentially to accomplish missions in war as well as military operations other than war (MOOTW). The Army's mounted forces are optimized for operations in an MTW but retain the ability to conduct SSC and PME missions.

a. Full-spectrum operations include offensive, defensive, stability, and support. Missions in any environment require brigades to conduct or be prepared to conduct any combination of these primary operations:

(1) **Offensive.** Offensive operations aim at destroying or defeating an enemy. Their purpose is to impose US will on the enemy for decisive victory.

(2) **Defensive.** Defensive operations defeat an enemy attack, buy time, economize forces, or develop conditions favorable for offensive operations. Defensive operations alone normally cannot achieve a decision. Their purpose is to create conditions for a counteroffensive that regains the initiative.

(3) **Stability.** Stability operations promote and protect US national interests by influencing diplomatic, civil, and military environments. Regional security is supported by a balanced approach that enhances regional stability and economic prosperity simultaneously. Army force presence promotes a stable environment.

(4) **Support.** Support operations employ Army forces to assist civil authorities, foreign or domestic, as they prepare for or respond to crises and relieve suffering. Domestically, Army forces respond only when directed by the NCA. Army forces operate

under the lead federal agency and comply with provisions of US law to include the Posse Comitatus Act and the Stafford Act.

b. Tank and mechanized infantry task forces normally conduct one type of operation at a time and transition from one type of operation to another as the strategic and operational requirements change.

## **Section II. OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK**

The operational framework consists of the arrangements of friendly forces and resources in time, space, and purpose with respect to each other and the enemy or situation. Commanders design an operational framework to accomplish their mission by defining and arranging three components--the AO, battlespace, and battlefield organization. Commanders use the operational framework to focus combat power.

### **1-4. AREA OF OPERATIONS**

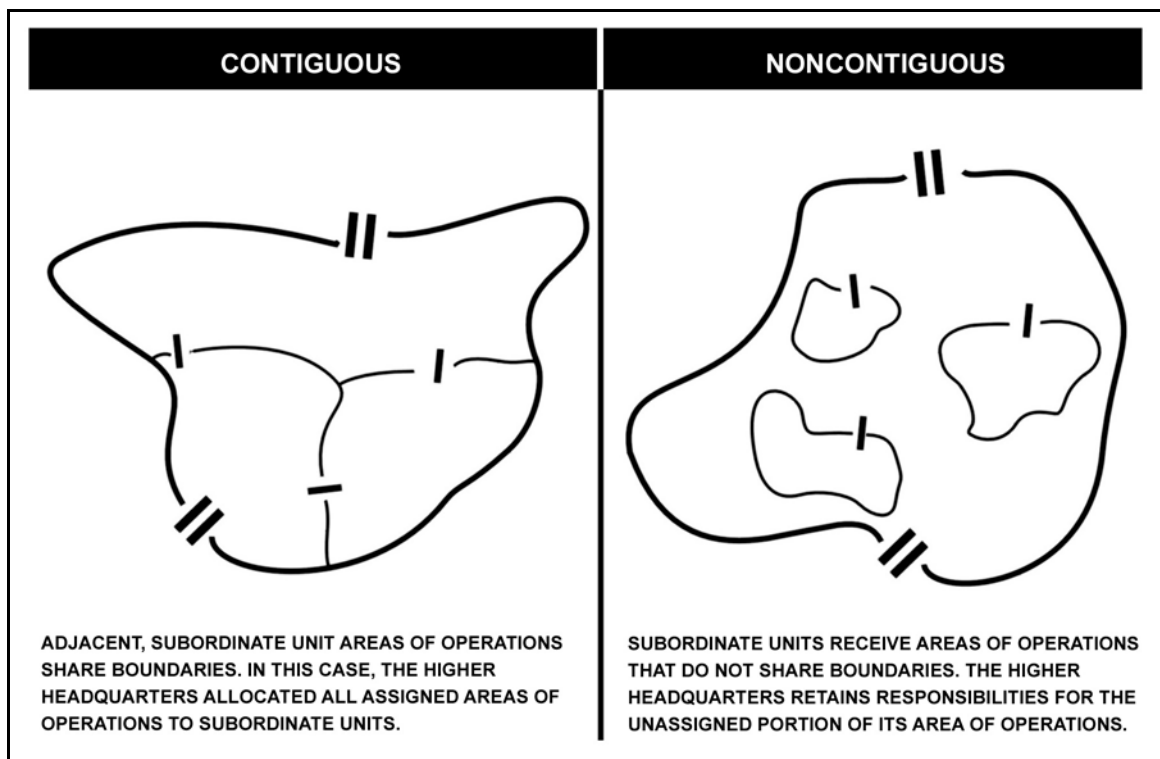
A tank and mechanized infantry task force's AO is the geographical area assigned by a higher commander, including the airspace above, in which the tank and mechanized infantry task force commander has responsibility and the authority to conduct military operations.

a. AOs should allow the commander to employ his organic, assigned, and supporting systems to the limit of their capabilities. The tank and mechanized infantry task force commander normally designates AOs for subordinate units. Commanders use control measures to describe AOs and design them to fit the situation and take advantage of the unit's capabilities. Commanders specify the minimum control measures necessary to focus combat power, delineate responsibilities, assign geographic responsibility, and promote unified action. At a minimum, control measures include boundaries on all sides of the AO.

b. Commanders typically subdivide some or all of the assigned AO by assigning subordinate unit areas. These subordinate AOs may be contiguous or noncontiguous (see Figure 1-2). When friendly forces are contiguous, a boundary separates them. When friendly forces are noncontiguous, the concept of operation links the elements of the force, but the AOs do not share a boundary. The intervening area between noncontiguous AOs remains the responsibility of the higher headquarters.

### **1-5. AREA OF INTEREST**

The tank and mechanized infantry task force's area of interest (AI) is a geographical representation of the area from which information and intelligence are required to execute successful tactical operations and to plan for future operations. It includes any threat forces or characteristics of the battlefield environment that will significantly influence accomplishment of the command's mission. A higher commander does not assign the AI. The AI is developed by the tank and mechanized infantry task force commander and his staff to help visualize the battlefield and determine information requirements.



**Figure 1-2. Contiguous versus noncontiguous.**

**1-6. BATTLESPACE**

Battlespace is the environment, factors, and conditions that must be understood to successfully apply combat power, protect the force, and complete the mission. Battlespace includes land, air, sea, space, enemy and friendly forces, facilities, weather, terrain, the electromagnetic spectrum, and the information environment within the AO and AI.

a. Battlespace is conceptual--a higher commander does not assign it. Commanders determine their battlespace based on their concept of operations. Commanders use their experience, professional knowledge, and understanding of the situation to visualize and change their battle space as current operations transition to future operations. Battlespace visualization begins with a picture of the ground and successively layers enemy, friendly, and environment over terrain visualization.

b. Battlespace is not synonymous with AO. Commanders visualize their battlespace to analyze all the factors that may impact on current and future operations, even if they can only directly affect those factors inside their AO. By defining his battlespace, and in particular, his AI, the commander can focus his intelligence and intelligence operations.

### **1-7. BATTLEFIELD ORGANIZATION**

Commanders visualize their battlespace and determine how to arrange their forces.

a. Battlefield organization is the arrangement of subordinate forces according to purpose, time, and space to accomplish a mission. The purpose-based framework centers on decisive, shaping, and sustaining operations. Purpose unifies all elements of the battlefield organization by providing the common focus for all actions. However, forces act in time and space to accomplish a purpose.

b. Tank and mechanized infantry task force commanders may organize forces according to purpose by determining whether each unit's operation will be decisive, shaping, or sustaining. Alternatively, commanders may organize forces by determining main effort and supporting effort(s). The commander chooses the technique to articulate his organization of forces based on which best facilitates his ability to visualize, describe, and direct actions at the tactical level. These decisions form the basis of the concept of operations. Commanders also synchronize operations in time and space. These thought processes are especially useful in combat operations that are generally contiguous, linear, and feature a clearly defined enemy force.

### **1-8. DECISIVE OPERATIONS**

Decisive operations directly achieve the mission and intent of the higher headquarters.

a. Decisive operations conclusively determine the outcome of battles and engagements. There is only one decisive operation for any phase of an operation for any given echelon. The decisive operation may include multiple actions conducted simultaneously throughout the depth of the AO. Commanders weight the decisive operation while economizing on the effort allocated to shaping operations.

b. In the offense and defense, decisive operations normally focus on maneuver. Conversely, logistics may be decisive during the mobilization and deployment phases of an operation or in support operations, particularly if the mission is humanitarian in nature.

c. A reserve is a portion of a body of troops that is kept to the rear or withheld from action at the beginning of an engagement but is available for a decisive movement. Until



committed, reserves shape through their placement within the AO while planning for and preparing to conduct operations. When committed, they either become or reinforce the decisive operation. Commanders can use reserves to influence circumstances or exploit opportunities. When commanders anticipate uncertainty, they hold a greater portion of the force in reserve, posturing the force to seize and maintain the initiative as a situation develops. Reserves deploy and reposition as necessary to ensure their protection, availability, and prompt reaction (see Chapters 5 and 6).

### **1-9. SHAPING OPERATIONS**

Shaping operations create and preserve the conditions for the success of the decisive operation. Shaping operations include lethal and nonlethal activities conducted throughout the AO.

a. Shaping operations support the decisive operation by affecting the enemy's capabilities and forces or influencing the opposing commander's decisions. Shaping operations use the full range of military power to neutralize or reduce enemy capabilities. They may occur simultaneously with, before, or after initiation of the decisive operation. They may involve any combination of forces and can occur throughout the depth of the AO. Some shaping operations, especially those that occur simultaneously with the decisive operation, are economy-of-force actions. If the force available does not permit simultaneous decisive and shaping operations, the commander sequences shaping operations around the decisive operation. A shaping operation may become the decisive operation if circumstances or opportunity demand. In that case, commanders weight the new decisive operations at the expense of other shaping operations. The concept of the operation clearly defines how shaping operations support the decisive operation.

b. Security is an important shaping operation. Security enables the decisive operation of the next higher headquarters. Security protects the force and provides time for friendly forces to react to enemy or hostile activities. It also blinds the enemy's attempts to see friendly forces and protects friendly forces from enemy observation and fires.

### **1-10. SUSTAINING OPERATIONS**

The purpose of sustaining operations is the generation and maintenance of TF combat power.

a. Sustaining operations are operations at any echelon that enable shaping and decisive operations by providing CSS, rear area security, movement control, and terrain management. Sustaining operations include the following elements.

(1) CSS sustains combat power by providing essential capabilities, functions, activities, and tasks necessary to sustain all elements of the operating forces. CSS encompasses those activities at all levels of war that generate and maintain forces on the battlefield.

(2) Rear area security includes measures taken by a military unit, an activity, or an installation to defend and protect itself against all acts that may impair its effectiveness.

(3) Movement control includes the planning, routing, scheduling, controlling, and security of personnel and materiel moving into, within, and out of the AO. Maintaining movement control and keeping lines of communication (LOCs) open are critical requirements in preserving freedom of movement throughout the AO.

(4) Terrain management includes the process of allocating terrain, designating assembly areas, and specifying locations for units and activities.

b. Sustaining operations are inseparable from decisive and shaping operations, although they are not by themselves decisive or shaping. Failure to sustain normally results in mission failure. Sustaining operations occur throughout the AO, not just within the rear area. Sustaining operations determine how fast forces reconstitute and how far forces can exploit success. At the tactical level, sustaining operations underwrite the tempo of the overall operation; they assure the ability of the TF to take immediate advantage of any opportunity.

### **1-11. MAIN EFFORT**

Within the battlefield organization of decisive, shaping, and sustaining operations, commanders designate and shift the main effort.

a. The main effort is the activity, unit, or area that the commander determines constitutes the most important task at that time. Commanders weight the main effort with resources and priorities. Within shaping and decisive operations, the brigade commander may designate a main effort for each operation; however, he will designate only one main effort per operation and shift the main effort as circumstances and intent demand.

b. The main effort and the decisive operation are not always identical. Identification of the main effort in shaping operations is a resource decision. A shaping operation may be the main effort before execution of the decisive operation. However, the decisive operation becomes the main effort upon execution. Shifting the main effort does not normally require changing or adjusting the plan. Commanders anticipate shifts of main effort throughout the operation. In contrast, changing the decisive operation from the plan requires execution of a branch, sequel, or new plan.